

How to Choose Safe Fireworks

Stay away from illegal explosives.

It is very important to know the difference between a legal consumer firework and a dangerous explosive device. Items such as M-80s, M-100s and blockbusters are not fireworks – they are federally banned explosives that can cause serious injury or even death.

Don't purchase or use unlabeled fireworks.

Stay away from anything that isn't clearly labeled with the name of the item, the manufacturer's name and instructions for proper use. If you are aware of anyone selling devices that are not labeled, contact your local police department.

Don't make fireworks at home.

Homemade fireworks are deadly. Never attempt to make your own devices, and do not purchase or use any kits that are advertised for making fireworks. Mixing and loading chemical powders is very dangerous and can kill or seriously injure you.

Fireworks Safety Tips

- Read and follow directions on fireworks packages.
- Make sure adults supervise the use of all fireworks. Never give young children fireworks. Even sparklers can be unsafe if used improperly.
- Do not point or throw fireworks at people or animals.
- Use fireworks in an open area away from dry grass and other flammable materials. Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies.
- Do not re-ignite extinguished fireworks. Do not attempt to repair broken fireworks.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place. Keep fireworks out of your pockets.
- Remember: fireworks are not toys. Fireworks burn at approximately the same temperature as a household match and can cause burn injuries and ignite clothing if used improperly.





What are fireworks?

Pyrotechnics, commonly known as fireworks, are explosives that provide spectacular displays of light, color and sound. For many people in the United States, fireworks play an important part in family celebrations and holidays. But because they are designed to burn and explode, fireworks are also a leading cause of injury. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 7,000 people were treated in 1998 for fireworks-related injuries – including burns, lacerations, amputations and blindness. Children between the ages of 10 and 14 are at greatest risk of injury.

Is it legal to buy, sell and use fireworks in South Carolina?

Yes, in most locations, private citizens may purchase and use fireworks. Retailers may sell fireworks, provided the retailer has applied for and received the proper dealer permit. However, in South Carolina it is illegal to sell fireworks to any person under the age of 14, unless they are accompanied by an adult. No fireworks salesperson or handler may be under 18 years old.

Who regulates the sale and use of fireworks in South Carolina?

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) is charged with ensuring compliance with the state’s fireworks

regulations. Two areas within LLR share responsibility for fulfilling this mission: the Office of State Fire Marshal and the State Board of Pyrotechnic Safety.

The Office of State Fire Marshal

This office handles transportation and use of pyrotechnics. Specifically, this office:

- Oversees the licensing process and approves licenses for people who shoot pyrotechnics.
- Ensures that fireworks displays have the proper safeguards for spectators. Deputy state fire marshals make random site checks to make sure spectators are being protected and that the pyrotechnics are being run within the guidelines of state laws and regulations.

The State Board of Pyrotechnic Safety

This board licenses the sale and storage of fireworks. Specifically, this board:

- Oversees the wholesale licensing process for firms who provide pyrotechnics for display.
- Oversees inspectors who visit facilities selling and storing fireworks to make certain they meet several criteria, including adhering to minimum building and electrical codes; and posting “No Smoking” signs. An initial inspection is made; if required, a re-inspection is conducted to see that corrections are made.
- Furnishes retail licenses and conducts audits of the offices that sell the license. The board also conducts random conformance inspections of these offices to make sure licensing is being done according to state regulations.

How do fireworks dealers get licenses?

In South Carolina, wholesale distributors, jobbers and retailers must have a license to sell fireworks. Wholesale distributors, defined as a person or firm selling fireworks to licensed jobbers and retailers, must purchase an annual license from the State Board of Pyrotechnic Safety at a cost of \$1,000. Jobbers, defined as a person or firm selling fireworks to licensed retailers, must purchase an annual license from the board at a cost of \$400. Each retailer must get an annual license or permit to sell permissible fireworks. The license or permit, which costs \$50, must be obtained from the municipal or county clerk in the area in which the fireworks will be sold. Penalties for selling fireworks without a license include fines and, in some cases, jail time. In addition, anyone who wants to hold a fireworks display must have a permit from the governing body of the county where the show will take place. The permit is processed in triplicate, with one copy going to the wholesaler supplying the fireworks for the show; one copy going to the person putting on the show; and one copy being forwarded to the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

What types of fireworks are banned in South Carolina?

Illegal explosive devices cause serious injuries. Federally banned since 1966, these devices are commonly known as M-80s, M-100s, blockbusters or quartersticks. These items will not contain a manufacturer’s name and are usually unlabeled. Any device that produces an audible effect such as a firecracker can only have up to two grains of pyrotechnic composition. Anything over two grains makes it an illegal device and the manufacture, storage or transport of such a device in South Carolina is illegal.

Permissible fireworks are ICC Class C “Common Fireworks” only. They can also be labeled as “1.4G” or “Firework UN0336.” They include Roman candles, bottle type rockets, cylindrical fountains, cone fountains, wheels, illumination torches, sparklers and firecrackers and salutes with casings. See Section 23-35-10 of the state Fireworks Laws and Regulations for specific weight and length requirements.

Who manufactures the fireworks sold in South Carolina?

There are a few domestic manufacturers of fireworks, but most fireworks are produced overseas, primarily in China.

How are consumers protected from unsafe and/or illegal fireworks?

To keep unsafe products out of South Carolina, the Board of Pyrotechnic Safety maintains good communication year-round with wholesalers. The board inspects each South Carolina wholesaler twice a year to ensure the products they sell are legal and safe. The board also works with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, as well as the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, to make certain the items being sold in South Carolina meet federal and state requirements.